

## U.S. MISSION TO SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

# CONSULAR NEWSLETTER

*Provided as a service to American Citizens in Serbia and Montenegro  
Issue 9, Spring 2006*



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<http://podgorica.usconsulate.gov>

**Dear Fellow Citizens,**

*It is my pleasure to greet all of you as the new consular officer in Podgorica. I am very happy to have recently arrived here with my family, and am excited about working in Podgorica. I have met some of you at the Town Hall meeting recently, and look forward to seeing you again or meeting you next time around. If there is an issue you would like me to address in the future newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact the Consulate. We are working very hard to be able to provide more services to you as we look toward the future, and if there is anything we can help you with at this time, do not hesitate to contact us.*

*With the very best regards,  
Miriam Lacho  
Consular Officer*

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## VISIT OF MAURA HARTY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS

On March 6-7, Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, Maura Harty, visited Belgrade for bilateral discussions on a number of consular issues. During her visit, Ambassador Harty met with Prime Minister Kostunica, Minister of Finance Dinkic, and counterparts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss property restitution, child custody issues, passport security, and general visa issues. Ambassador Harty also raised concerns about the unresolved 1999 murders of three American citizens and pressed for continued vigilance in bringing those responsible to justice.

Here in the consular section, we were very pleased to have the opportunity to spend time with Ambassador Harty, who is the senior Department of State official in charge of the work we do on a daily basis, and to discuss with her our recent initiatives to better serve American citizens --- such as this newsletter and our ongoing consular outreach visits to different communities in Serbia and Montenegro.

If you have any suggestions for how we can better serve your needs, please feel free to e-mail your suggestions to [BelgradeACS@state.gov](mailto:BelgradeACS@state.gov)



### Town Hall meeting in Podgorica

The U.S. Consulate in Podgorica recently organized a Town-Hall style meeting for American citizens. The event took place the afternoon of March 22, 2006 at the American Corner in Podgorica. All registered American citizens in Montenegro were invited, and approximately 50 participated. Those without access to a computer were mailed invitations to try to ensure that all registered Americans were made aware of the event.

The Chief of Consular Section at the United States Embassy Belgrade gave an overview of the work the Consulate in Podgorica is doing here and answered questions and concerns. Also, the new consular officer at Consulate Podgorica, had an opportunity to meet American citizens and introduce herself.

A variety of issues were covered, including: the ACS services the Consulate in Podgorica provides, internet resources for Americans living abroad, and general issues concerning our mission and goals. During question and answer session, most questions involved social security inquiries, requests for eligibility for American citizenship, requests for visa information, and property restitution follow up.

Consulate Podgorica will host similar events again in the near future.

## Outreaches

### STUDENT OUTREACH

On March 22, U.S. Embassy Belgrade's Chief of Consular Section Karen Martin and Elizabeth Chung from the International Academic Center visited the University of Montenegro. Ms. Martin presented information about procedures and regulations for obtaining U.S. student visas and was available to answer attendees' questions. Ms. Chung discussed educational opportunities in the United States and resources available through the International Academic Center.

The International Academic Center in Belgrade, SCG, located at Palmoticeva 19/5 in downtown Belgrade, is a part of the Education USA network of educational information centers, approved and supported by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Center, which provides accurate, unbiased information concerning accredited higher educational opportunities in the United States, serves communities throughout Serbia and Montenegro through the promotion of a full range of US higher education and international exchange opportunities in the United States. The Center's website address is: <http://www.iacbg.org/>

## IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT THE 2006 U.S. ELECTIONS



All American citizens are reminded that 2006 is an election year in the United States. Overseas citizens are eligible to participate in primary, run-off, and special elections that occur throughout the year, as well as the general elections in November. A calendar of election dates is available on the Internet at

<http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>. You are encouraged to register to vote and/or request absentee ballots as early in the year as possible to ensure that you will receive all ballots for which you are eligible.

### The following is the basic absentee voting process:

- You complete an application form (see below) and send it to local election officials in the U.S.
- The local official approves your request, or contacts you for further information
- The local official sends you an absentee ballot
- You vote the ballot and send it back in time to meet your state's deadline

If the ballot receipt deadline is drawing near, and you have not yet received the blank ballot from local officials, you can download an emergency ballot, write in the names of the candidates and the offices for which they are running, and send it back in time to meet your state's ballot receipt deadline. The emergency ballot (SF-186, Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, or FWAB) is available on the Internet at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/forms.html>.

Registration and ballot request procedures and deadlines vary by state. Information about your state's procedures is available on the Internet at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/vag/vagchapter3.html>. Information about your state's registration and voting deadlines is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>.

There may be late changes to your state's voting calendar, procedures or deadlines. When these occur, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) will issue a News Release. News Releases are available on the Internet at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/releases.html>.

The official US Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). It has a wealth of information about absentee voting, including the downloadable absentee ballot application (SF-76, Federal Post Card Application, or FPCA), state-specific instructions for completing the form, links to or contact numbers for state and local officials, and the downloadable emergency ballot.

Overseas Americans may contact Democrats Abroad, Republicans Abroad or other American citizens groups or organizations for absentee voting information, or for assistance in registering to vote or to request absentee ballots. Links to these groups may be found on the FVAP website at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/ocitlinks.html>.

Non-partisan information about candidates, their voting records, and their positions on issues is widely available and easy to obtain via the Internet. You may use the links appearing on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at <http://www.fvap.gov/links/otherlinks.html>, or you can choose to use one of the many popular search engines to locate articles and information.

Additionally, the Voting Assistance Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade or Consulate in Podgorica is available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, call +381-11-306-4665 or 4666 in Belgrade and +381-81-225-417 in Podgorica or send an e-mail to [BelgradeACS@state.gov](mailto:BelgradeACS@state.gov). Look for notices from the Embassy/Consulate throughout the year relating to the 2006 elections.



Again, we strongly encourage you to begin this process as soon as possible. Should questions or problems occur, you would still be able to address them in time to vote in your state's primary and general elections.

***On April 11, 2006, there will be a special election in California's 50th Congressional District to fill the seat of Rep. Randy Cunningham. To vote overseas, you must request a ballot by sending a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to the proper election official in your state of legal residence. The American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy/Consulate can provide you with an FPCA upon request. You may also use the online version of the FPCA (it must be printed out and sent to the Embassy postage paid) from [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov). Upon filling out the application, you may mail or deliver it to the Embassy/Consulate and well place it into the U.S. mail.***

## INTERNET-BASED REGISTRATION SYSTEM (IBRS)

### INTERNET-BASED REGISTRATION SYSTEM (IBRS)

The Embassy and Consulate strongly encourage all American citizens residing or traveling abroad to register with us.

U.S. citizens around the world who travel or reside abroad can access the State Department's secure online registration website either through a link on <http://travel.state.gov> or directly at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs>. We invite you to register yourself and your family and get acquainted with travel registration. Even if you believe you are already registered with the Embassy in Belgrade or Consulate in Podgorica, please take a minute to check your record and update any information that may have changed.

If you encounter any difficulties or have any questions about the State Department's registration website, please send an e-mail to [caibrs@state.gov](mailto:caibrs@state.gov). If you have specific questions about your registration with the Embassy or Consulate please contact us at [BelgradeACS@state.gov](mailto:BelgradeACS@state.gov) or [Podgorica@state.gov](mailto:Podgorica@state.gov).

### REQUEST FOR CELLULAR TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR TEXT-MESSAGING

The American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade and U.S. Consulate Podgorica would like to implement a text messaging network, whereby registered American citizens in Serbia and Montenegro can receive short text messages (SMS). The SMS is sent to cellular telephones, informing the user that a new warden message has been issued (i.e., posted on the Embassy/Consulate website and e-mailed to individual registrants) and providing important information in case of an emergency. Since some of our registrants do not have constant access to the Internet, this text-messaging capability enhances our ability to contact Americans in the event of an emergency.

As with all personal information provided by American citizens, we consider privacy and information technology security to be a top priority, we will ensure that cellular phone numbers are protected properly as required by law.

If you would like to participate, please make sure that your cellular telephone supports the text messaging option and provide us with your phone number along with your name, by e-mail to [BelgradeACS@state.gov](mailto:BelgradeACS@state.gov) (for U.S. Embassy Belgrade) or [ulicj@state.gov](mailto:ulicj@state.gov) (for U.S. Consulate Podgorica). We encourage your participation as an emergency preparedness measure.



## **United States Issuing New Electronic Passports in Pilot Program**

### **State Department expects to issue e-passports to American public later in 2006**

Washington -- The United States is issuing electronic passports as part of a pilot program for diplomatic passports, and plans to issue U.S. e-passports to the American public at all domestic passport agencies by the end of 2006, the State Department announced.

According to the State Department media note on the new passports, the e-passport integrates the latest concepts in electronic document protection and readability and aims to facilitate international travel for U.S. citizens while enhancing border security. The State Department began limited production of the e-passport December 30, 2005.

Officials say the e-passport is the same as a traditional passport with the addition of a small integrated circuit (or "chip") embedded in the back cover. The new passport combines face-recognition and chip technology.

According to State Department documents, the chip securely will store the same data visually displayed on the photo page of the passport (name, date of birth, gender, place of birth, dates of passport issuance and expiration, passport number), and will also include a digital photograph. The inclusion of the digital photograph will enable biometric comparison, through the use of facial recognition technology at international borders, officials say.

"The information contained on the integrated circuit embedded in the passport will not provide a means to track U.S. citizens. This information will be used only in identity verification at ports of entry during travel," State Department Consular Affairs spokeswoman Laura Tischler said in an interview February 27.

To prevent data written to the chip from being susceptible to unauthorized reading, Tischler said that "anti-skimming" shielding material has been incorporated in the passports front cover, which she said prevents the chip from being read when the passport book is closed. The official said the State Department also has included basic access control (BAC) technology in the new passports to prevent skimming and eavesdropping.

According to State Department documents, BAC is similar to a personal identification number used in automatic teller machine (ATM) transactions. In the case of the e-passport, characters from the printed machine-readable zone of the passport must be read first in order to unlock the chip for reading.

Thus, when an electronic passport is presented to an inspector at a port of entry, the inspector must scan the printed lines of data to be able to read the data on the chip.

The biometric passport requirements stem from U.S. legislation passed in 2002 -- the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002 (also known as the Border Security Act). The law originally required that the government of countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) certify they had a program to produce tamper-resistant, machine-readable passports that incorporate a biometric identifier that complies with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards by October 26, 2004. In mid-2004, Congress extended the deadline one year.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, further clarified requirements for continued participation in the VWP in Spring 2005, specifying that by October 26, 2006, travelers from VWP countries with a passport issued on or after this date must present a passport with an integrated circuit chip, also known as e-passport, capable of storing biographic information from the passport's data page, a digitized photograph and other biometric information. (See [related article](#).)

The VWP enables citizens of 27 countries to visit the United States for tourism or business for up to 90 days without obtaining a visa. Those countries are Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Tischler said the United States is leading global efforts to ensure the e-passport "is a secure, globally interoperable document that meets ICAO standards." Discussing the benefits of the e-passport, she said the document prevents fraud and protects identity. "[I]f stolen, it makes it incredibly difficult for someone else to use your passport. It [The e-passport] gives border inspectors a new tool to verify you are the person to whom a given government issued that document," she said. "The e-passport is a better way of ensuring the passport bearer is the person to whom the passport was issued," she said.

A State Department [media note](#), [images](#) of the new design and [additional information](#) on the U.S. e-passport are available on the department's Web site (<http://usinfo.state.gov>)

# INCOME TAX INFORMATION

Dear Citizens, this year we have not received any paper tax forms from the IRS. However, if you are reading this on a computer, you should be able to download any of the forms you need through the IRS website at: <http://www.irs.ustreas.gov>.

If you are having trouble downloading forms or publications through the website, you can call, e-mail, or visit us and we will download the form and provide to you.

## IRS CONTACT INFORMATION

The Consular Section cannot answer specific questions regarding how to complete forms or how to file. If you need assistance, you may wish to contact the Regional IRS Office located at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, Germany at phone number (49)30-8305-1140, or fax number (49)30-8305-1145.

If you would like to explore the opportunity for free tax-filing services, please log on to <http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118986,00.html> for qualification and choice of service providers.

*In addition, you can refer to the following sources of information:*

- \* IRS Home Page: <http://www.irs.gov>
- \* Citizens Abroad: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/article/0,,id=97324,00.html>
- \* Persons in the Military <http://www.irs.gov/individuals/military/index.html>
- \* Tax Forms and Publications <http://www.irs.gov/formspubs/index.html>
- \* Electronic Payment Website: <http://www.eftps.gov>
- \* Refund Information: Go to <http://www.irs.gov>, click on "Where's my refund?"
- \* Tax Law Questions: Go to <http://www.irs.gov>, click on "help" in the top menu, click on "Tax Law Questions"

## IRS PHONE SERVICES

- \* Individuals: 1-800-829-1040
- \* Businesses: 1-800-829-4933
- \* Customer Service Phone: 1-215-516-2000, M-F, 0600-2300 (EST)
- \* Customer Service Fax: 1-215-516-2555
- \* Refund Inquiries: 1-800-829-1954
- \* TeleTax: 1-800-829-4477
- \* ITINS after 30 days: 1-215-516-4846
- \* Exempt Organization Help Desk: 1-877-829-5500
- \* Tax Offset Program (TOP) Help Desk: 1-800-304-3107\*
- \* E-Services Help Desk: 1-512-416-7750

***The Fax Service cannot be used to transmit your tax return.***

## MAILING ADDRESSES

The Philadelphia Service Center services all overseas filers, including military personnel stationed abroad:

**INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE**  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19255-0215

***For Courier Service:***

PHILADELPHIA SERVICE CENTER  
11601 ROOSEVELT BLVD  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19154

***ITN:***

IRS Philadelphia Service Center  
ITIN Unit  
P.O. Box 447  
Bensalem, PA 19020

**URGENT TAX NEEDS**

***For Collection/Levy Status Accounts Problems:***

Phone: 1-215-516-2004  
Fax: 1-215-516-6931

***Taxpayer Advocate Office***

Phone: 1-215-516-2499  
Fax: 1-215-516-2677  
Toll-Free: 1-877-777-4778

**INTERNATIONAL TAXPAYER ADVOCATE SERVICE**

San Patricio Office Center, Room 200  
7 Tamobico Street  
Guaynabo, Puerto Rico 00966  
Phone: 787-622-8931  
Fax: 787-622-8933

## Lawful Permanent Resident Status: What are the rules for keeping my "Green Card"?

In general, persons who acquire Lawful Permanent Resident Status (aka "Green Card" status) in the United States are presumed to intend to reside in the United States. If you, or your family member, do not intend to actually establish residence in the United States, we do not recommend that you apply for an immigrant visa.

Each time a permanent resident re-enters the United States after an absence abroad, he or she is subject to inspection by an immigration official who will determine whether or not that person has abandoned

their status as a permanent resident. Although there is a technical requirement to not be out of the United States more than one year without obtaining a re-entry permit, it does not follow that you can maintain permanent residence simply by entering the United States for a one or two week vacation each year while continuing to reside abroad.

The USCIS website <http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/PermRes.htm> contains additional information which may be helpful to you, including the following:

### **Maintaining Permanent Residence**

You may be found to have abandoned your permanent resident status if you:

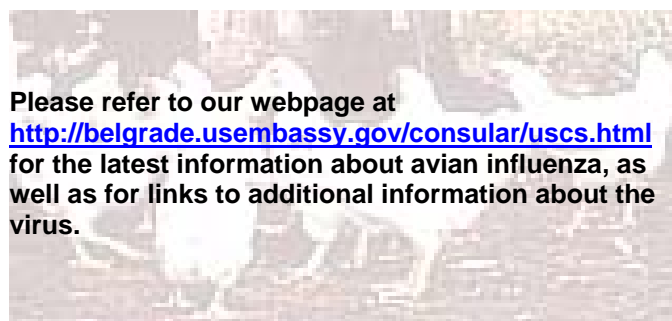
- Move to another country intending to live there permanently.
- Remain outside of the US for more than one year without obtaining a reentry permit or returning resident visa. However in determining whether your status has been abandoned any length of absence from the US may be considered, even if it is less than one year.
- Remain outside of the US for more than two years after issuance of a reentry permit without obtaining a returning resident visa. However in determining whether your status has been abandoned any length of absence from the US may be considered, even if it is less than one year.
- Fail to file income tax returns while living outside of the US for any period.
- Declare yourself a "nonimmigrant" on your tax returns.

If you have any additional questions concerning these technical requirements, please feel free to contact the immigrant visa unit at +381-11-306-4660 or 4662.

### **UPCOMING HOLIDAYS**

*The Embassy and/or Consulate will be closed on the following official holidays:*

*April 21, Friday - Orthodox Good Friday (M)  
April 24, Monday - Orthodox Easter Monday (M)  
May 1, Monday - May Day (S/M)  
May 2, Tuesday - May Day (S/M)  
May 29, Monday - Memorial Day (A)*



Please refer to our webpage at <http://belgrade.usembassy.gov/consular/uscs.html> for the latest information about avian influenza, as well as for links to additional information about the virus.

### **SUBSCRIPTION TO AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVICES NEWSLETTER**

*To subscribe to our quarterly newsletter and other updates, please provide the Embassy or Consulate with your e-mail address.*



## OTHER USEFUL INTERNET ADDRESSES AVAILABLE FOR U.S. CITIZENS

U.S. Federal Government:	<a href="http://www.firstgov.gov">http://www.firstgov.gov</a>
U.S. Department of State Consular Affairs:	<a href="http://travel.state.gov">http://travel.state.gov</a>
U.S. Department of Homeland Security:	<a href="http://www.dhs.gov">http://www.dhs.gov</a>
U.S. Federal Aviation Administration:	<a href="http://www.faa.gov">http://www.faa.gov</a>
U.S. Internal Revenue Service:	<a href="http://www.irs.gov">http://www.irs.gov</a>
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov">http://www.cdc.gov</a>
World Health Organization	<a href="http://www.who.org">http://www.who.org</a>
Social Security Administration:	<a href="http://www.ssa.gov">http://www.ssa.gov</a>
SSA Newsletter:	<a href="http://www.ssa.gov/enews/">http://www.ssa.gov/enews/</a>
Federal Voting Assistance:	<a href="http://www.fvap.gov">http://www.fvap.gov</a>
U.S. Customs & Border Protection:	<a href="http://www.cbp.gov">http://www.cbp.gov</a> (for information including importation of household pets, animal and plant health inspection, etc)
U.S. Department of Agriculture:	<a href="http://www.usda.gov">http://www.usda.gov</a> (for information on food products, food safety and inspection service)
U.S. Postal Inspection Service:	<a href="http://www.usps.com/websites/depart/inspect/">http://www.usps.com/websites/depart/inspect/</a>
Internet Fraud Complaint Center:	<a href="http://www.ifccfbi.gov">http://www.ifccfbi.gov</a>
Embassy of Serbia and Montenegro in Washington, D.C.:	<a href="http://www.yuembusa.org">http://www.yuembusa.org</a>



**Happy Easter**